

**THE
BIG
BLACK
THING**

CHAPTER. 2

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**Edited by
Michael Mohammed Ahmad
and Winnie Dunn**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writing edited by
Ellen van Neerven**

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Production Team

Editors / Michael Mohammed Ahmad and Winnie Dunn

Editor: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Writing / Ellen van Neerven

Assistant Editor / Shirley Le: 2017 WestWords Western Sydney Emerging Writers' Fellow

Layout and Design / Nadine Beyrouti and Elaine Lim

School Workshop Facilitators / Winnie Dunn, Ellen van Neerven, Shirley Le, Mariam Cheik-Hussein, Louisa Badayala, Tamar Chnorhokian, Khalid Warsame and Michael Mohammed Ahmad

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Foreword

People always assume that the title of our anthology means something perverse. ‘The Big Black Thing? More like my big black shit!’ one high school student smirked as the boys howled with laughter.

Jokes aside, The Big Black Thing always captures attention wherever it is presented. The title was originally borrowed from an Instagram caption written by lina Kastoumis, which featured in Chapter. 1. Now the title of our anthology series is more like a metaphor for Sweatshop’s version of contemporary Australian literature, which carries and reclaims stories written by marginalised people from Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Big Black Thing: Chapter. 1 was launched at Walsh Bay for the Sydney Writers’ Festival in May 2017. We invited every contributor to take part in the celebration and enter a privileged literary space previously closed off to most minority communities from Western Sydney. Our writers travelled from Bankstown, Blacktown, Parramatta, Mt Druitt, Penrith, Auburn and Liverpool to participate. It was a full house. Right when the doors closed, young refugee writers from Lurnea High School knocked on the windows trying

to get into their own event. With every seat taken, those of us from Sweatshop chanted, 'Let Them In!' The organisers eventually violated fire safety codes just for us to stop yelling. This is how I've seen The Big Black Thing attempt to transform literature and lives: It has opened doors to showcase writing that pushes back against racist, sexist, classist and queerphobic narratives produced in Australia and around the world by mainstream media, art and television. As author and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie argues, when the marginalised write against, beyond and despite dangerous single narratives, we create awareness, multiplicity and original contributions to world knowledge.

Weaved into this second issue of The Big Black Thing are new and familiar writers from the Western Sydney Writers Group, who have reclaimed their hybrid identities through prose and poetry. Shirley Le and Stephen Pham remember Auburn-born, Myuran Sukumaran, a member of the Bali Nine who was executed in 2015 by the Indonesian Government for drug trafficking. Monikka Eliah finds her nana in a knitted jumper, Peter Polites examines the relationship between local and international violence against queer men of colour, Tamar Chnorhokian shows us what it means to be a 'sik bitch' and Gabby Florek reveals the 'Brown hand of God' in her Afro Peruvian ancestry. Amanda Yeo writes about the awkward stumbles and casual puns in flirting, Adam Anderson speaks to the diaspora of being a mixed-raced Indonesian man in his ancestral homeland, Samantha Hogg fights off her inner demons with a sprained ankle and Tien Tran brings the suburbs

of Perth to the doorstep of Western Sydney in a ‘stupid-ass’ orange car. Once again, there is also an exciting collection of poetry from the Western Sydney Writers Group featured in *The Big Black Thing*: Omar Sakr spills Arab identity across Lurnea, Kane Harrington re-introduces us to the might of the pen, Jason Gray street talks from above and Evelyn Araluen maps out Dodge City, lined with goanna trees, COSTCO and Macca’s.

Alongside these contributions are the works of young writers from Sir Joseph Banks High School, Lurnea High School and Wiley Park Girls High School. Students from first, second and third generation Arab, African, East Asian, South Asian, South-East Asian and Pasifika backgrounds take readers through the burnt rubber roads of the Hume Highway to midnight gunfire in the streets of Baghdad.

The pages within this book also include a series of untitled works by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers from Glenmore Park High School, Kingswood High School and St Clair High School. This particular content was curated and edited by award-winning Yugambah author Ellen van Neerven, and the stories of First Nation Australians speak for themselves loud and clear.

Lastly, *The Big Black Thing*: Chapter. 2 is blessed with six artworks from this year’s feature artist, Emma Hicks. I first met Emma at a Sweatshop picnic in 2017 and immediately came to admire her empathy for mundane phenomena. I remember Emma alerting

me to a small common myna bird lying in the dirt of Auburn Botanic Gardens. We thought it died until it rustled its feathers and flew upward. This is what Emma's collection of artworks, titled 'Conversations: feathers, quandongs and tracks', reminds me of – using ink to cast footprints, seedlings and feathers, she has created conversations about responsibilities, ethics and stories in the places we inhabit.

Even in the year 2018, Australia remains a country that seems to lack the kind of mainstream literature which reflects the colour of our history and modern society. Here again, in the pages ahead, is a collection of prose and poetry that go against, beyond and despite a mono-cultural version of Australia. Here again is this big black thing...

Winnie Dunn / Sweatshop Manager and Editor

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Talk Shit

Auckland Uati



Don't fuck with a Samoan lady. They always have a fire under their bellies just waiting to get lit. Samoan families talk shit. One time my cousin Paulo said, 'We bought a new PS4 today.' Even though he didn't. Mum rubbed her belly and said with big eyes, 'Ohh we bought that ages ago.' We didn't have shit. We never have shit.

Dark, Putrid Lines

Marko Poletanovic



/ The Meet

I arrived at the car park at Centro late as usual of course. My friends were already there with their JDMs all organised, prepped and ready for the race. We took it down to the Hume Highway just past the reservoir. Two paved lanes of the traffic-plagued road were about to receive a couple more sets of tyres. We each lined up at the lights: Suly in his RX7, Toey in his 2JZ, Jaaf in his R32, Fouf in his STI, and me in my R34 Skyline. The lights shortly after like half an hour, turned green. The windows of nearby shook, and the road was rumbling. Us boys scarred dark, putrid lines and tyre smoke on the road, and floored it down the highway, quickly approaching 100/mph.

／ *Krispy Kreme*

I was in my Twin Turbo Supra as I clocked 187/mph on the Hume Highway. The coppers pulled me over to the side of the road and straight away a tall fat shit gets out of the car and comes to my window. I had a twelve pk of Krispy Kreme glazed donuts on the lap of some chick in the passenger seat.

‘Do you know why I pulled you over?’ said the fat copper with a bogan as accent.

‘Cause you smelt my Krispy Kreme, didn’t ya?’

The Big Black Thing: Chapter. 2 is the second issue in a new series of prose and poetry by emerging and established writers from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Featuring Auckland Uati, Marko Poletanovic, Paris Caroline Henry, John Truong, Michel Anderson, Marouf Alameddine, Ebony Annor, Jessica Vu, Joanne Georgousakis, Jaafar Ibrahim, Amanda Yeo, Suleiman Suleiman, Omar Sakr, Cloe Letele, Bassima Hadid, Eman Arja, Farah Abdelkarim, Evelyn Araluen, Shayma Assaad, Norita Rizvi, Shirley Le, Stephen Pham, Mariam Al Asaad, Hikmah Tebe, Tamar Chnorhokian, Catherine Prasad, Peter Polites, Safa El-Mazloun, Tien Tran, Aya Elgamal, Samar El-Charif, Abigail Chand, Monikka Eliah, Tasnim Alam, Maya Ali, Kane Harrington, Gabriella Florek, Ushna Fatima, Yazmeen Akoum, Aqeela Shauab, Samantha Hogg, Sam Sabri, Aws Al Khamisi, Azeez Azeez, Belal Shahoud, Ghadeer Darraji, Sam Nathim Naeem, Saman Al Zuhairi, Savyo Yonan, Adam Alsabahi, Ameer Alkhamis, Adam Phillip Anderson, Dani Mejbel, Jason Gray, Tyreice Peachey, Brandon Gale, Marko Bogic, Trinity Wensley, Dominic Mills, Kasey Weightman, Trenton Fynn, Samantha Snedden, Tellah Edwards, Riley Kefford, Lachlan Holmes, Jamil Janif, Chelsea Randell, Tahlia Blacklock, Kiah Bolt, Mikayla Kumar, Colt Currell, Hayley Laws, Harrison Randell, Caitlin Laws, Isaac Miller and artworks by Emma Hicks.

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sweatshop.